Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Resolution 1544 (2007)[1]

The situation of women in the South Caucasus

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Although the countries of the South Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – display a very rich cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, the situation of women, in a post-Soviet context, shows some similarities between the three. There is therefore a need for a shared regional commitment, exchanges of good practice and co-operation between the three countries in order to improve women's situation.

2. The situation of women in the South Caucasus is, indeed, worrying. The participation of women in public and political life is quite limited. Women continue to be under-represented in national parliaments, governments, local councils and in senior positions, whether in political parties, the civil service or business. In the employment sector, although progress has been made with regard to legislation, in practice women often suffer discrimination which prevents them from finding jobs and/or obtaining adequate income. Their health, in particular their reproductive health, is not given due attention. Violence against them is often covered up. The situation of refugee and displaced women is alarming. Women's prisons need to be brought up to European standards.

3. Equal opportunities for women and men should be made a national political priority, as they will not come about automatically.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly therefore calls on the national authorities of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to include equal opportunities for women and men among their priorities and urg with regard to the participation of women in public and political life:es them:

4.1. with regard to the participation of women in public and political life:

4.1.1. to comply with Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making and with Assembly Recommendation 1738 (2006) on mechanisms to ensure women's participation in decision making;

4.1.2. to foster balanced participation of women and men in decision making:

4.1.2.1. by taking measures to develop equal participation by men and women in political parties and democratic institutions;

4.1.2.2. by setting up, if necessary, committees on gender equality in their respective parliaments and assigning such committees real and adequate powers;

4.1.2.3. by increasing the proportion of women members in national parliaments who hold posts of responsibility such as chairs of committees, sub-committees and national delegations, and by encouraging them to come forward as rapporteurs and put their names on lists of speakers;

4.1.3. to promote women's right to take part in elections: by taking all necessary measures to prohibit and eliminate family voting;

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 16 March 2007 (see Doc. 11178, report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Mrs Oskina).

4.1.4. by increasing the minimum rate of female representation in parliament and other elected assemblies, in accordance with Assembly Recommendation 1676 (2004) on women's participation in elections;

4.1.5. by training women and raising their awareness so as to encourage them to stand as candidates in elections;

4.1.6. by making it easier for women to move from civil society work to politics;

4.2. with regard to combating discrimination in employment:

4.2.1. to comply with Assembly Recommendation 1700 (2005) on discrimination against women in the workforce and the workplace, in particular:

4.2.1.1. through gender mainstreaming in economic development and poverty reduction programmes;

4.2.1.2. by establishing affordable childminding facilities and day centres for the elderly with suitable opening hours;

4.2.2. to take all necessary measures to ensure balanced participation of women and men in all spheres of economic life:

4.2.2.1. through gender mainstreaming in economic development and poverty reduction programmes;

4.2.2.2. by establishing affordable childminding facilities and day centres for the elderly with suitable opening hours;

4.2.3. to set concrete goals for reducing the wage gap between women and men, in particular in the private sector;

4.2.4. to combat discrimination against women in the workplace and adopt measures to help them break through the "glass ceiling";

4.3. with regard to women's health:

4.3.1. to focus on hygiene in public hospitals and provide quality care at affordable prices to people who need it;

4.3.2. to prevent abortions:

4.3.2.1. by raising awareness of effective contraception among both women and men;

4.3.2.2. by stepping up efforts to give women and girls access to affordable or, if necessary, free contraception;

4.3.3. to offer optimum health and psychological care when women or girls request the interruption of pregnancy in a medical establishment;

4.4. with regard to violence against women:

4.4.1. to raise awareness among all relevant authorities and the public at large concerning the existence of violence against women, in particular domestic violence;

4.4.2. to take part in the Council of Europe campaign to combat violence against women, including domestic violence;

4.4.3. to take effective measures to combat such violence by adopting legislation, if they have not already done so, including on marital rape, and by establishing penalties in line with the seriousness of the offences committed and providing compensation for victims, including by setting up a compensation fund;

4.4.4. to continue to set up shelters for victims when there is no other way of protecting them against the perpetrators;

4.4.5. to raise awareness among all relevant authorities and the public at large about efforts to combat human trafficking, and to take vigorous action to fight it:

4.4.5.1. in Azerbaijan's case by signing, and in the case of all three countries by ratifying, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197);

4.4.5.2. by implementing the convention without further delay, in particular by protecting trafficking victims and affording them the status of victims and granting them rights;

4.4.6. to assign to the relevant ombudsperson powers and responsibilities concerning violence against women and granting him or her adequate funding in this connection;

4.4.7. to introduce a strict prohibition of child marriages and by undertaking explanatory work in order to raise families' awareness about this reprehensible practice;

4.5. with regard to refugee and displaced women:

4.5.1. to implement Assembly Resolution 1497 (2006) on refugees and displaced persons in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia;

4.5.2. to help women gain access to posts of responsibility in the management bodies of camps for refugees and displaced persons;

4.5.3. to raise awareness among refugee and displaced women about their right to physical and psychological integrity and their right to report any offences;

4.5.4. to make sure that humanitarian aid is allocated according to needs, particularly to refugee and displaced women;

4.5.5. as regards the governments of Azerbaijan and Georgia, to further their efforts in the construction of new homes for refugees and the removal of refugees from camps to houses;

4.6. with regard to the situation of women prisoners:

4.6.1. to comply with Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the European Prison Rules, in particular:

4.6.1.1. by building or bringing up to European standards women's prisons in order to meet the health and hygiene requirements for places of detention;

4.6.1.2. by accommodating all women who are sentenced prisoners or remand prisoners in individual cells at night, except where it is preferable for them to share sleeping accommodation with other women who are sentenced or remand prisoners;

4.6.2. to make sure that detention on remand and imprisonment of women are used only as a last resort, especially in the case of minors and mothers, by reducing and, where appropriate, regulating the length of periods of detention on remand;

4.6.3. to make sure that prison regimes and prison facilities are suited to the category of each female prisoner;

4.6.4. to facilitate the reintegration into society of women who are prisoners or remand prisoners by providing them with appropriate work and training during their imprisonment;

4.7. to involve NGOs in drawing up their policies and to support them financially.